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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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Information as of 1600
12 December 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Units of the 3rd North Vietnamese Division have lost almost 500 killed in six days of heavy fighting in Binh Dinh Province.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US and South Vietnamese troops report killing nearly 500 enemy soldiers in Binh Dinh Province in six days of fighting (Paras. 1-5). US Marines killed 54 North Vietnamese in a day-long battle on 11 December just south of the Demilitarized Zone. (Paras. 6-8). Some Communist main force units in northwestern III Corps are apparently avoiding contact with allied forces (Paras. 9-14).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Senate has issued a statement denouncing the National Liberation Front (Paras. 1-2).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi has sharply denounced US efforts to bring the Vietnam problem before the United Nations (Paras. 1-3). Seven Spanish veterans of the French Foreign Legion who remained in North Vietnam after the Indochina War have recently returned to Spain (Paras. 4-7).

VI. Other Major Developments: Foreign shipping to North Vietnam in November was lower than the monthly average for the first six months of 1967 (Paras. 1-5).

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~~TOP SECRET~~I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Troops of the 1st Air Cavalry Division and South Vietnamese infantrymen reported on 11 December that they had killed nearly 500 enemy soldiers in six days of fighting in the Bong Son plains of northern Binh Dinh Province.

2. The US troops reportedly were responsible for 304 enemy dead. South Vietnamese forces state that they killed 167 enemy. The allies captured 11 crew-served and 48 individual weapons.

3. American losses were 33 dead and 197 wounded; South Vietnamese losses were 30 dead and 71 wounded. After-action reports indicate that the comparatively light allied casualties were the result of a maximum use of artillery, air strikes, and helicopter gunships.

4. In its early stages the action in Bong Son was characterized by coordinated sweeps by US and South Vietnamese battalions which resulted in a nearly complete encirclement of a battalion of the 22nd Regiment, North Vietnamese 3rd Division. Heavy air and artillery strikes were directed on the enemy positions. On 9 December South Vietnamese forces sweeping the battle area engaged several isolated platoon-size enemy units. The following day the focus of the action shifted to a nearby fortified enemy hamlet. US troops made repeated attempts to overrun the complex during the day, but failed. After a night of air and artillery bombardment, however, the US forces took the hamlet early on 11 December.

5. The 22nd Regiment recently moved into the rice-rich Bong Son area from the An Lao Valley. This unit, along with the other regiments of the North Vietnamese 3rd Division, has been among the most resilient in South Vietnam. The target of massive allied operations in 1966--MASHER/WHITE

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WING, THAYER, and IRVING--in which it suffered heavy losses, the 3rd Division has nonetheless managed to sustain a damaging guerrilla campaign in Binh Dinh Province. This year in Operation PERSHING, US forces have lost 551 killed and over 2,500 wounded in the Bong Son area.

New Fighting in the Demilitarized Zone Area

6. US Marines backed by artillery and tanks reported killing 54 North Vietnamese in a day-long battle on 11 December just south of the Demilitarized Zone.

7. The action took place midway between Con Thien and Gio Linh and just north of an allied strongpoint now under construction. Twenty US troops were wounded in the fight, the third sharp clash in the area in a week.

8. The US troops were sweeping the area between Con Thien and Gio Linh, apparently in response to communications intelligence reports which indicated that elements of the North Vietnamese 90th Regiment were planning an attack in the sector. During the day enemy gunners fired nearly 70 mortar and artillery rounds at allied positions just below the Demilitarized Zone; they caused light casualties and little damage to the heavy fortifications.

Communist Maneuvering in Northwestern III Corps

9. Some Communist main force units in South Vietnam's northwestern III Corps apparently are avoiding contact with allied forces. In recent weeks, most of the North Vietnamese 7th Division has been noted in communications intelligence moving out of northern Tay Ninh Province to new locations farther east, probably in anticipation of new allied operations there.

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10. Northern Tay Ninh Province--known as Communist War Zone "C"--has long been a Communist stronghold and the site for the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN). Successful allied operations through the zone earlier this year drove the Viet Cong 9th Division out of the area. Some of the enemy forces took sanctuary in nearby Cambodia while others moved to the east and south. Shortly thereafter, the 6,100-man North Vietnamese 7th Division with its three subordinate regiments--the 101st, 141st, and the 165th--moved into Tay Ninh from Communist War Zone "D" to the east.

11. In recent weeks, however, the 101st Regiment has apparently relocated to western Binh Duong Province, the 141st Regiment has redeployed into central Binh Long Province, and the 165th Regiment has moved into southern Binh Long. These maneuvers may have been designed to protect infiltration and supply routes in sensitive areas in addition to enemy anticipation of large-scale allied activity in northwestern III Corps. The Communists may hope that the positioning of 7th Division units will enable them to harass allied units in rear areas. Such operations could be partially designed to limit the concentration of allied units in offensive forays into Tay Ninh.

12. A similar shift of enemy forces away from areas of intensified allied operations occurred earlier this year when elements of the Viet Cong 5th Division moved from their long-time operational area in southeastern III Corps. The division's headquarters and one of its two regiments left the Phuoc Tuy - Long Khanh Province area and moved northward into northern III Corps.

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14. A major new allied operation--codenamed YELLOWSTONE--is in progress in northern Tay Ninh Province and is probably the impetus behind the recent enemy movements. Seven US Army battalions of the 25th Infantry Division and two infantry battalions of the South Vietnamese 49th Regiment began this operation on 8 December and are to search for enemy forces and installations throughout the northern half of Tay Ninh Province. In addition, these forces will construct Special Forces camps and a heavy artillery position and will clear, improve, and maintain allied lines of communication throughout the area.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Senate on 8 December unanimously agreed to issue a statement denouncing the National Liberation Front. The statement condemned terrorism and sabotage by the Front and made particular reference to the recent Viet Cong attack on the montagnard hamlet of Dak Son. It charged that the Front, while usurping the name of "the government of South Vietnam," is actually only a tool of North Vietnam. Recognition of the Front "in any form" was condemned as a "violation of the Vietnamese people's right of self-determination."

2. One senator attempted to have a proviso added calling for legislation to outlaw the Front. He later withdrew his proposal. Another senator argued that such legislation could be interpreted as recognition of the Front as separate from the Communist Party, which is already outlawed.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi has broken its silence regarding recent activities at the UN related to Vietnam by issuing a sharply worded denunciation of US efforts to bring the Vietnam problem before the Security Council. This was the essence of an authoritative "Commentator" article in the party daily Nhan Dan, which was broadcast on 12 December.

2. The article claimed that the US was up to its "old tricks" of making the UN serve its "aggressive plan against Vietnam," and of "scrapping the 1954 Geneva agreements." It reiterated Hanoi's longstanding position that the "UN has no jurisdiction whatsoever to settle the Vietnam problem," and cited the Liberation Front's recent denial that it had tried to send representatives to the UN to discuss the Vietnam question.

3. "Commentator" also restated Hanoi's most rigid formulations for a settlement of the conflict. The article concluded by claiming that Hanoi's Four Points and the Front's new political program reflect the basic principles and main provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements, which, it said, "the countries participating in the Geneva conference, as well as other countries and the UN, have the duty to respect."

Spanish Refugees From North Vietnam

4. Seven Spanish veterans of the French Foreign Legion who remained in North Vietnam after the end of the Indochina war have recently been returned to Spain. Their repatriation is the latest of Hanoi's efforts over the past three years to rid the country of foreign elements which the regime has felt to be untrustworthy.

5. The refugees spent most of the years since 1954 in villages outside Hanoi engaged in semiskilled

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and laboring tasks. Most of the information they may provide will probably be on the areas where they lived and the attitude of the people there toward the war.

6. In an initial press statement, the refugees complained about their treatment by the North Vietnamese and stated that even after many years they were considered foreigners. They claimed that the North Vietnamese were not afraid of the US and were determined to fight "until none of them is left standing."

7. Prior to their evacuation on 30 November, the refugees spent several weeks in Hanoi. In a report of their impressions of conditions there, they said that despite North Vietnamese Government propaganda, bomb damage to Hanoi did not appear to be extensive and that the government was using "black smoke" to simulate damage. The refugees observed that traffic in Hanoi was flowing in both directions across the Doumer Bridge, and that there appeared to be plenty of labor available for repairing bridges and other vital points. Such repairs seemed to be made effectively within a reasonable period of time. The Spaniards also observed numerous small generators in the capital and reported that electric power was available on some days but not on others.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. About 105,600 tons of cargo were delivered to North Vietnam by foreign flag ships in November. Although this is some 17,000 tons higher than in October, it is still below the monthly average of 128,400 tons delivered during the first half of 1967. Deliveries of bulk foodstuff totaled 20,500 tons. Petroleum deliveries rose to 20,700 tons, of which 7,000 tons originated in China and 13,700 tons in the Soviet Union. North Vietnam has now imported about 218,000 tons of petroleum this year compared with 200,800 tons during all of 1966. Since the POL facilities in Haiphong were bombed in June 1966, almost all POL deliveries have come from the Soviet Far East aboard small tankers.

2. Fifteen Soviet ships--12 freighters and 3 tankers--delivered about 54,400 tons of cargo to North Vietnam in November compared with an average of 66,750 tons during the first six months of 1967. Five ships originated in the Black Sea and the remaining ten came from far eastern ports. Cargo deliveries aboard Soviet flag ships thus far in the second half of 1967 have averaged about 38 percent less a month than during the January-June period. Most of this drop occurred in cargoes originating from the Black Sea. The greatest drop occurred in fertilizer and general cargoes--industrial equipment, metal products, and spare parts.

3. The volume of shipping to North Vietnam may increase in December. Six Soviet ships have already arrived this month, at least five more are en route. Several ships are scheduled for December voyages between Vladivostok and Haiphong.

4. The record level of shipping into North Vietnam in the first half of 1967 caused a strain on Haiphong's cargo handling capabilities and some ships remained in port more than 60 days. The decline in the rate of shipping during the second half of the year has permitted a significant reduction in the backlog of ships in Haiphong, and the turnaround time has been reduced from 33 days in August to less than 18 days in November.

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5. Recent photography shows North Vietnam is making increasing use of barges in Haiphong both in lightering ships in the outer harbor and in unloading ships at the commercial pier. Since the rail bridge out of Haiphong was cut in late September, increased use of barges has aided in the distribution of cargoes via the inland water route to such major distribution centers as Hanoi and Nam Dinh.

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